

Message Text

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46

ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 IO-10 DPW-01 AID-05 IGA-01

CIAE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01

PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 SCS-03 SCA-01 OPR-02 A-01

SY-05 OC-05 CCO-00 SCCT-01 USSS-00 OMB-01 /103 W

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R 240924Z MAR 75

FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3027

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY PARIS

CINCPAC

DIA WASHDC

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMCONSUL C FANG MAI

SECDEF WASHDC

COMIPAC HONOLULU HI

MACTHAI J-2 BKK THAI

DEPCHIEF UDORN RTAFB

13 AF ASIC CLARK AFB RP

USSAG/IN NKP RTAFB THAI

C O N F I D E N T I A L VIENTIANE 2050

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, MOPS, LA

SUBJECT: SITUATION IN BAN HOUET SAI

REF: VIENTIANE 1998

1. ACCOMPANIED BY USAID DIRECTOR MANN AND AREA COORDINATOR
HUXTABLE (BAN HOUET SAI), I MET URGENTLY WITH THE PRIME
MINISTER MARCH 23RD TO BRIEF HIM ON THE SITUATION IN BAN
HOUET SAI.

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2. I REVIEWED THE BACKGROUND OF THIS AFFAIR NOTING THAT THE THREATS TO OUR AMERICAN AND LAO PERSONNEL MADE IT IMPOSSIBLE TO MAINTAIN USAID OPERATIONS AT THIS TIME. HUXTABLE THEN TOLD HIS STORY IN LAO.

2. THE PRIME MINISTER WAS GRAVE AND LISTENED ATTENTIVELY. HE SAID HE WOULD GET HOLD OF GENERAL VANNASENG (THE GOVERNOR) AND GET THINGS UNDER CONTROL. MEANWHILE HE WOULD APPRECIATE OUR KEEPING OUR AMERICAN PERSONNEL OUT OF BAN HOUEI SAI. AFTER GLANCING AT AN ANTI-AMERICAN LEAFLET WHICH HAS BEEN DISTRIBUTED IN BAN HOUEI SAI, HE COMMENTED THAT HE WOULD ALSO TALK TO FONMIN PHOUMI. THE LATTER HAD ASKED HIM TO APPROACH THE AMERICANS FOR INCREASED AID. THIS WAS A CURIOUS WAY TO ELICIT AMERICAN SUPPORT.

3. WITHOUT BELABORING THE POINT, I STRESSED THE SERIOUS POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES OF OUR BEING RUN OUT OF BAN HOUEI SAI Owing TO THE DISORDER CAUSED BY A HANDFUL OF SO-CALLED STUDENTS. I ALSO EXPRESSED CONCERN FOR OUR LAO EMPLOYEES AS WELL AS CONSIDERABLE SKEPTICISM REGARDING THE ABILITY OF GENERAL VANNASENG TO TAKE APPROPRIATE ACTION GIVEN THE WEAKNESS OF THE VIENTIANE SIDE IN THE AREA. I ALSO EXPRESSED CONCERN OVER THE EVIDENT LACK OF REPORTING ON THIS SITUATION THROUGH LAO POLICE AND MILITARY CHANNELS. THE PRIME MINISTER SAID THAT OUR INFORMATION WAS THE FIRST HE HAD RECEIVED AND REPEATED THAT HE WOULD SEE WHAT COULD BE DONE.

4. COMMENT: I DO NOT BELIEVE THAT THIS LATEST INCIDENT IN BAN HOUEI SAI IS PART OF AN ORCHESTRATED PATHET LAO SCHEME, BUT I SEE GRAVE CONSEQUENCES ARISING FROM THE RLG INABILITY TO MAINTAIN THE MOST BASIC LEVEL OF SECURITY IN THE TOWN. THE AMERICANS THERE AND OUR LAO EMPLOYEES ARE TOUGH AND EXPERIENCED AND HAVE BEEN THROUGH SIMILAR NONSENSE IN OCTOBER AND DECEMBER. THEIR DECISION TO SKIP ACROSS THE RIVER WAS ABSOLUTELY RIGHT. WHEN THE MILITARY AND CIVILIAN AUTHORITIES CANNOT CONTEND WITH A HANDFUL

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OF GUN-TOTING VANDALS FOR FEAR OF PATHET LAO RE-PRISALS OR POLITICAL PRESSURES, A SITUATION EXISTS WHICH CAN ONLY BE DESCRIBED AS ANARCHY. IF WORST COMES TO WORST WE WILL ORGANIZE A WELL-MANAGED AND I HOPE DIGNIFIED WITHDRAWAL. AT THE MOMENT WE HAVE BRIEFED ALL APPROPRIATE CIVIL AND MILITARY LEADERS AND CAN ONLY WAIT AND SEE.

WHITEHOUSE

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptoning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: ANTIAMERICAN FEELING, POLITICAL SITUATION, BAN HOUOI SAI
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 24 MAR 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975VIENTI02050
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750102-0143
From: VIENTIANE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750320/aaaaaryh.tel
Line Count: 115
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 75 VIENTIANE 1998
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 22 MAY 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <22 MAY 2003 by ifshinsr>; APPROVED <27 MAY 2003 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SITUATION IN BAN HOUOI SAI
TAGS: PINS, MOPS, CPRS, LA
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006